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Economic Development Plan  
*for*  
Harrison West / A.C. Humko

*Prepared by:*

*Planning Division  
Department of Development  
City of Columbus*

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## Introduction

Section 5709.40 of the Ohio Revised Code authorizes the legislative authority of a municipal corporation to create, by ordinance, an incentive district and declare improvements within that district to be of public purpose. Improvements are defined as increases in assessed values of properties that occur after adoption of the ordinance that created the district.

To be eligible for establishment, an incentive district must be enclosed by a continuous boundary, contain no more than three hundred acres, and have one or more distress characteristics defined by the Code. Distress characteristics include (but are not limited to) blighted property, high unemployment rates, and above-average poverty rates. In the absence of these characteristics, or in addition to them, evidence that the public infrastructure serving the district is inadequate to meet development needs may be presented in the form of an economic development plan. The plan must be adopted by the corresponding legislative authority and certified by the municipal corporation's engineer.

This particular economic development plan is intended to facilitate the creation of an incentive district for the blighted A.C. Humko industrial properties located in the Harrison West neighborhood of Columbus, Ohio. The parcels, last occupied by a vegetable oil refinery in 2001, are contaminated with fuel oil, sulfuric acid, arsenic, asbestos, and polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons. Residential redevelopment has recently been proposed but will not be feasible until the existing buildings have been demolished and the contamination has been removed. Public improvements will also be necessary to ensure that the new residences will be adequately served by utilities, roadways, and other forms of infrastructure. The establishment of an incentive district will enable the city of Columbus to support the redevelopment effort by dedicating funds for these public improvements.

## **Planning Area**

Generally known as the former A.C. Humko industrial site, the planning area is bounded by West Second Avenue to the north, Ingleside Avenue to the east, the alley north of Buttles Avenue to the south, and the Olentangy River to the west. The planning area contains approximately 16.4 acres of land and several abandoned buildings. Royal Tallow Holdings, Ltd. purchased the acreage in May of 2003 and is the sole owner of record.

The properties have been used for various industrial operations since the late 1890's. Former owners include Sinclair Oil, the Columbus Forge and Iron Company, Capital City Products Company, Stokely-Van Camp Inc., Dresser Industries, International Derrick and Equipment Company, Ohlen and Sons Saw Manufacturing Company, Washington Breweries Inc., and the Joyce Products Company. ACH Food Companies Inc., the most recent occupant, ceased operations in 2001.

Most of the property within the planning area is zoned Manufacturing, although some parcels are zoned Commercial C-3 and Commercial C-4. The parcels north of the planning area are zoned Residential R-2F and Residential R-4; the parcels to the west and south are zoned Manufacturing.

The surrounding neighborhood (Harrison West) consists primarily of one and two-family dwellings. Most of the homes were built during the first few decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, although infill redevelopment has yielded many newer structures in recent years. The local neighborhood association, the Harrison West Society, continues to actively support context-sensitive redevelopment that reinforces the neighborhood's historic character and pedestrian-oriented development patterns.

## **Proposed Development**

The Wagenbrenner Company and Royal Tallow Holdings, Inc. are proposing to redevelop the planning area with 107 condominium units and 222

apartments. Single-family dwellings, duplexes, and multi-family structures will occupy 10.2 acres; the remaining acreage will be dedicated to the City of Columbus as right-of-way and parkland. Streets and alleys that adjoin the site will be extended into the property and several off-street parking lots will be constructed to serve the six apartment buildings. The project will be relatively dense (approximately 20 units/acre), but the proposed buildings are consistent with the scale and architectural character of the Harrison West neighborhood. Garages for the single-family and two-family dwellings will be detached and located at the rear of each lot, adjacent to alleys. Sidewalks and street trees will be installed along all new streets.

### **Infrastructure Needs**

Almost all of the site's existing infrastructure will be removed during remediation and demolition. Consequently, significant improvements and/or additions to public infrastructure will be necessary to provide the new residential units with sufficient access to public utilities and thoroughfares. To provide for adequate vehicular circulation, Perry Street, West First Avenue, and Percy Street will be improved and extended into the site. Alleys will be constructed to provide access to garages; sidewalks will be installed along both sides of each street to accommodate pedestrian traffic. Provisions for storm water drainage and sanitary sewer service will also be made. Other improvements may include connections to water, telephone, electric, and/or natural gas lines.

### **Economic Impact**

The planned development is desirable for several reasons. It will eliminate a significant public health threat, provide new housing options for area residents, generate \$500,000 of additional tax revenue annually for the city of Columbus, and improve both the appearance and function of the built landscape. In its present condition, the idle site is an eyesore and a hazard. Removing the

contaminated soil and improving the property with new dwellings will add value to the property. (It may enhance the value of adjoining properties as well.) Over time, the development may also serve to attract contiguous growth by extending and expanding necessary public infrastructure.

The project will contribute to the city's employment base by generating construction-related employment opportunities for several years. Upon completion, the residential community will employ five people on a permanent, full-time basis: a resident manager, a maintenance foreman, two maintenance workers, and a leasing agent. A sales agent will also be needed on a full-time basis for two years, to help market the single-family dwellings.

## **Supporting Policies**

The Columbus Comprehensive Plan states:

“Infrastructure is necessary whenever development and redevelopment occur. When adequate public infrastructure investments are planned and programmed to accompany development activities of the private sector, ‘growing pains’ can be minimized. It is one of the principal aims of this Plan to ensure that the city of Columbus coordinate and plan infrastructure investments, as well as investments in other municipal functions and services, to meet the needs of this growing community and enhance the quality of life for all.”

Similarly, the Principles of Progress contained in the Columbus Covenant 2000 recognize that provisions for adequate infrastructure are essential for economic growth and job creation. The Covenant also notes that the efficient delivery of services contributes to quality of life and helps to promote “strong, distinct and vibrant neighborhoods”.

## **Public Process**

Although the redevelopment proposal has not yet been submitted to the Development Commission or City Council, the Harrison West Society has hosted several public meetings. The Society also publishes a monthly newsletter (distributed to local residents); the front page has featured stories about the project on several occasions. The Society has enthusiastically supported the proposal as it has evolved and continues to remain engaged in dialogue with the developers. Most recently, in November of 2003, the Society voted to support the developer's application for TIF financing (refer to Attachments D and E). The Society has also endorsed the developer's request for a \$3 million grant from the Clean Ohio Fund, to help facilitate remediation and clean-up.

In the coming months, as plans for the project are finalized, residents and other interested parties may have additional opportunities to review the proposal. If a rezoning or council variance application is ultimately filed, it will be discussed in public meetings hosted by the Harrison West Society, the Development Commission, and Columbus City Council. Such meetings are always open to the public and adjoining property owners would be notified of these hearings by mail.

## **Conclusion**

The redevelopment of the A.C. Humko site will benefit the Harrison West neighborhood in numerous ways. It will also contribute to the economic health and physical growth of the city of Columbus. Though desirable, this growth must be served with adequate public infrastructure – which does not yet exist. The creation of an incentive district will help the city of Columbus to provide funding for this infrastructure and thus accommodate future growth, while providing for the safe and efficient delivery of public goods and services.